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Programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017

Estimates in respect of special political missions, good offices and other political initiatives authorized by the General Assembly and/or the Security Council

Thematic cluster I: special and personal envoys and special advisers of the Secretary-General

Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

Addendum

I. Introduction

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Secretary-General on estimates in respect of special political missions, good offices and other political initiatives authorized by the General Assembly and/or the Security Council (thematic cluster I, A/71/365/Add.1). During its consideration of the report, the Committee met with representatives of the Secretary-General, who provided additional information and clarification, concluding with written responses received on 8 November 2016.

2. The main report of the Secretary-General (A/71/365) provides an overview of the proposed resource requirements for 2017 for 31 special political missions and related cross-cutting issues. Five addenda to the main report cover the specific requirements for thematic clusters I to III and the two largest missions, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) (A/71/365/Add.1-5). Issues of a cross-cutting nature pertaining to all special political missions will be covered in the main report of the Advisory Committee (A/71/595), while the budget proposals for thematic clusters I to III, UNAMA and UNAMI will be covered in its related reports (A/71/595 and addenda).



3. The report of the Secretary-General presents the resource requirements for 2017 for 9 of the 11 missions grouped under thematic cluster I relating to the special and personal envoys and special advisers of the Secretary-General. The proposals for Burundi and Yemen will be submitted in separate addenda.

4. The Advisory Committee recalls that the General Assembly approved a biennial provision of \$1,124,400,000 net under section 3, Political affairs, of the programme budget for 2016-2017 for special political missions (resolution 70/249 A). A summary of the provision for the biennium is provided in annex I to the main report of the Secretary-General (A/71/365).

II. Resource requirements

5. The resources proposed for nine special political missions under thematic cluster I in 2017 amount to \$34,385,900, reflecting an increase of \$7,460,000 (27.7 per cent) compared with the appropriation of \$26,925,900 for 2016. Taking into account the projected overexpenditure at the end of 2016, representing an increase of \$2,693,100 (10 per cent) over the appropriation, the additional resources sought by the Secretary-General for the nine missions amount to \$37,079,000. Tables 1 and 2 below provide a summary of the resource requirements for 2017 with a breakdown of the proposed resources by mission (see also A/71/365 Add.1, table 1) and major category of expenditure, respectively.

Table 1
Summary of resource requirements by mission

(Thousands of United States dollars)

Mission	1 January-31 December 2016				Requirements for 1 January-31 December 2017				
	Appropriations	Estimated expenditure	Variance		Appropriation 2016	Total requirements	Non-recurrent requirements	Variance (2017-2016)	Net requirements for 2017
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(1)-(2)	(4) = (1)	(5)	(6)	(7) = (5)-(4)	(8) = (5)-(3)
Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Myanmar	1 127.2	1 115.0		12.2	1 127.2	1 137.8	—	10.6	1 125.6
Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus	2 564.6	2 701.1		(136.5)	2 564.6	2 810.5	15.0	245.9	2 947.0
Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide	2 183.7	2 174.0		9.7	2 183.7	2 201.0	—	17.3	2 191.3
Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara	549.5	537.9		11.6	549.5	545.3	—	(4.2)	533.7
Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004)	624.9	419.9		205.0	624.9	489.2	—	(135.7)	284.2

Mission	1 January-31 December 2016			Requirements for 1 January-31 December 2017 ^a				
	Appropriations	Estimated expenditure	Variance	Appropriation 2016	Total requirements	Non-recurrent requirements	Variance requirements (2017-2016)	Net requirements for 2017 ^a
	(1)	(2)	(3) = (1)-(2)	(4) = (1)	(5)	(6)	(7) = (5)-(6)	(8) = (5)-(3)
United Nations Representative to the Geneva International Discussions	1 937.7	1 937.7	—	1 937.7	1 976.0	—	38.3	1 976.0
Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria	12 124.3	14 900.5	(2 776.2)	12 124.3	19 506.3	80.6	7 382.0	22 282.5
Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sudan and South Sudan	1 412.7	1 450.2	(37.5)	1 412.7	1 387.3	—	(25.4)	1 424.8
Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region	4 401.3	4 382.7	18.6	4 401.3	4 332.5	26.5	(68.8)	4 313.9
Total	26 925.9	29 619.0	(2 693.1)	26 925.9	34 385.9	122.1	7 460.0	37 079.0

^a Net requirements after taking into account the estimated underexpenditure or overexpenditure for 2016.

Table 2
Summary of financial resources by major category of expenditure

Category of expenditure	1 January-31 December 2016			Requirements for 1 January-31 December 2017 ^a				
	Appropriation	Estimated expenditures	Variance	Appropriation 2016	Total requirements	Non-recurrent requirements	Variance requirements (2017-2016)	Net requirements for 2017 ^a
	(1)	(2)	(3) = (1)-(2)	(4) = (1)	(5)	(6)	(7) = (5)-(6)	(8) = (5)-(3)
I. Civilian personnel								
1. International staff	16 946.5	17 233.1	(286.6)	16 946.5	18 616.2	—	1 669.7	18 902.8
2. National staff	1 449.9	1 552.1	(102.2)	1 449.9	1 988.2	—	538.3	2 090.4
Total, category I	18 396.4	18 785.2	(388.8)	18 396.4	20 604.4	—	2 208.0	20 993.2
II. Operational costs								
1. Consultants	506.2	712.0	(205.8)	506.2	530.5	—	24.3	736.3
2. Official travel	3 197.1	3 542.3	(345.2)	3 197.1	4 103.6	—	906.5	4 448.8
3. Facilities and infrastructure	2 280.1	3 451.2	(1 171.1)	2 280.1	5 064.3	21.2	2 784.2	6 235.4
4. Ground transportation	470.3	477.7	(7.4)	470.3	571.7	—	101.4	579.1
5. Air transportation	129.8	129.8	—	129.8	125.0	—	(4.8)	125.0
6. Communications	708.2	702.5	5.7	708.2	740.0	28.2	31.8	734.3
7. Information technology	424.0	439.2	(15.2)	424.0	423.5	72.7	(0.5)	438.7
8. Medical	4.6	4.6	—	4.6	4.6	—	—	4.6

Category of expenditure	2016 (January–31 December 2016)			Requirements for 2017 (January–31 December 2017)				
	Appropriation	Estimated expenditures	Variance	Appropriation 2016	Total requirements	Non-recurrent requirements	Variance (2017–2016)	Net requirements for 2017
	(1)	(2)	(3) = (1) – (2)	(4) = (1)	(5)	(6)	(7) = (5) – (4)	(8) = (5) – (3)
9. Other supplies, services and equipment	809.2	1 374.5	(565.3)	809.2	2 218.3	—	1 409.1	2 783.6
Total, category II	8 529.5	10 833.8	(2 304.3)	8 529.5	13 781.5	122.1	5 252.0	16 085.8
Total (net of staff assessment)	26 925.9	29 619.0	(2 693.1)	26 925.9	34 385.9	122.1	7 460.0	37 079.0

Budget performance for 2016

6. The estimated expenditures for 2016 amount to \$29,619,000, representing an increase of \$2,693,100 (10 per cent) over the appropriation of \$26,925,900. The overall increase reflects the estimated net effect of higher than budgeted requirements for three missions and lower than budgeted requirements for five missions. A summary of the significant variances between the 2016 appropriation and projected expenditures is provided in table 4 of the Secretary-General's main report (A/71/365).

7. Key variances between the approved resources and projected expenditures for 2016 include the following:

(a) For the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, the additional requirements in 2016 (\$2,776,200, or 22.9 per cent) are related to the expansion of the mandate of the Office under Security Council resolutions 2254 (2015) and 2268 (2016), resulting in higher expenditures under: (i) posts (\$384,700, or 4.7 per cent), for the deployment of 23 additional international staff and national staff; (ii) consultants (\$200,000, or 100 per cent), to support the Special Envoy during the intra-Syrian talks and International Syria Support Group (ISSG) task force meetings; (iii) official travel (\$459,000, or 49.9 per cent), undertaken by the Special Envoy, the Deputy Special Envoy and substantive staff for consultation with various stakeholders; (iv) other supplies services and equipment (\$561,400, or 232.9 per cent), related to servicing of additional conferences, meetings, peace talks and task force meetings; and (v) facilities and infrastructure (\$1,171,100, or 69.1 per cent), for office space for additional staff and rental of secure premises in Damascus. A commitment authority was approved by the Advisory Committee on 7 June 2016 in the amount of \$4,693,200 under the terms of General Assembly resolution 70/250. The report of the Secretary-General indicates that appropriation for the amount used against the commitment authority will be sought in the context of the overall requirements for special political missions for the biennium 2016–2017;

(b) For the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus, the additional requirements in 2016 (\$136,500, or 5.3 per cent) are related to an increase in the pace of negotiations aimed at reaching a comprehensive settlement, resulting in higher expenditures for: (a) international staff (\$80,200, or 4.9 per cent)

owing to lower than budgeted actual vacancy rates; and (b) official travel (\$40,800, or 23.9 per cent);

(c) For the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004), the lower than planned requirements (\$205,000, or 32.8 per cent) are mainly due to lower actual staff costs for incumbents of positions and lower requirements for official travel subsequent to the resignation of the Special Envoy in May 2016.

Proposed resources for 2017

8. The proposed resources for 2017 amount to \$34,385,900, representing an increase of \$7,460,000 (27.7 per cent) over the appropriation for 2016. The overall increase reflects the net effect of increased requirements for five missions and lower requirements for four missions compared with 2016. A summary of the significant variances between the approved resources for 2016 and the proposed resources for 2017 is provided in table 6 of the Secretary-General's main report (A/71/365).

9. Key variances between the approved resources for 2016 and proposed requirements for 2017 include the following:

(a) For the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, the proposed resources for 2017 amount to \$19,506,300, reflecting an increase of \$7,382,000 (60.9 per cent) over the appropriation for 2016 (\$12,124,300). The increase is related to the expansion of the mandate of the Office under Security Council resolutions 2254 (2015) and 2268 (2016), resulting in the proposed net increase of 30 international and 22 national staff positions as well as higher requirements for travel, conference-related services and rental of secure premises in Damascus;

(b) For the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus, the proposed resources for 2017 amount to \$2,810,500, reflecting an increase of \$245,900 (9.6 per cent) over the appropriation for 2016 (\$2,564,600), related to the proposed establishment of two international staff positions (1 P-3 and 1 Field Service);

(c) For the United Nations Representative to the Geneva International Discussions, the proposed resources for 2017 amount to \$1,976,000, reflecting an increase of \$38,300 (2.0 per cent) owing to lower projected vacancy rates for international staff;

(d) For the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Myanmar, the proposed resources for 2017 amount to \$1,137,800, reflecting an increase of \$10,600 (0.9 per cent) due to an increase in international staff costs reflecting the higher actual average step in grade and dependency status of current incumbents, partly offset by the decrease in travel requirements;

(e) For the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, the proposed resources for 2017 amount to \$2,201,000, reflecting an increase of \$17,300 (0.8 per cent) owing to an increase in international staff costs reflecting the higher actual average step in grade and dependency status of current incumbents;

(f) For the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004), the proposed resources for 2017 amount to \$489,200, reflecting a decrease of \$135,700 (21.7 per cent) over the appropriation for 2016 (\$624,900), related to a decrease in travel requirements;

(g) For the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sudan and South Sudan, the proposed resources for 2017 amount to \$1,387,300, reflecting a decrease of \$25,400 (1.8 per cent) owing to higher projected vacancy rates for international staff, partly offset by the proposed establishment of one driver position (1 Local level);

(h) For the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, the proposed resources for 2017 amount to \$4,332,500, reflecting a decrease of \$68,800 (1.6 per cent), mostly under: (i) international staff costs reflecting the lower actual average step in grade and dependency status of current incumbents; and (ii) information technology, owing to the discontinuation of internationally contracted personnel as a result of the change in support arrangements for the Office;

(i) For the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara, the proposed resources for 2017 amount to \$545,300, reflecting a decrease of \$4,200 (0.8 per cent) attributable to lower international staff costs reflecting the ratio of actual common staff cost expenditures to actual salaries based on average expenditure trends.

A. Comments and recommendations on staffing requirements

10. Table 3 below presents positions approved for 2016, the vacancy situation as at 30 September 2016 and the proposed staffing requirements for 2017 for the nine missions covered in the report of the Secretary-General on thematic cluster I.

Table 3
Summary of staffing requirements^a

	Approved for 2016	Vacant positions as at 30 September	Proposed for 2017 ^b	New positions	Abolishments	Reclassifications
Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Myanmar	5 (1 USG, 2 P-4, 1 P-3, 1 GS (OL))	—	5 (1 USG, 2 P-4, 1 P-3, 1 GS (OL))	—	—	—
Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus	19 (1 USG, 1 D-1, 3 P-5, 5 P-4, 3 FS, 1 GS (OL), 5 LL)	—	21 (1 USG, 1 D-1, 3 P-5, 5 P-4, 1 P-3, 4 FS, 1 GS (OL), 5 LL)	2 (1 P-3, 1 FS)	—	—
Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide	10 (1 USG, 1 ASG, 1 ASG, 1 P-5, 3 P-4, 2 P-3, 2 GS (OL))	—	10 (1 USG, 1 ASG, 1 P-5, 3 P-4, 2 P-3, 2 GS (OL))	—	—	—
Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara	2 (1 USG, 1 P-3)	—	2 (1 USG, 1 P-3)	—	—	—
Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004)	3 (1 USG, 1 P-4, 1 GS (OL))	1 USG	3 (1 USG, 1 P-4, 1 GS (OL))	—	—	—
United Nations Representative to the Geneva International Discussions	7 (1 ASG, 1 P-5, 2 P-4, 2 P-3, 1 GS (OL))	—	7 (1 ASG, 1 P-5, 2 P-4, 2 P-3, 1 GS (OL))	—	—	—
Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria	80 (1 USG, 1 ASG, 1 D-2, 2 D-1, 6 P-5, 11 P-4, 7 P-3, 13 FS, 9 GS (OL), 29 LL)	22 (1 D-2, 2 P-5, 5 P-4, 5 P-3, 3 FS, 6 LL)	132 (1 USG, 1 ASG, 1 D-2, 3 D-1, 9 P-5, 21 P-4, 18 P-3, 1 P-2, 17 FS, 9 GS (OL), 51 LL ^c)	58 (1 D-1, 3 P-5, 10 P-4, 11 P-3, 1 P-2, 4 FS, 3 GS-OL, 25 LL)	6 (3 GS (OL), 3 LL)	—
Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sudan and South Sudan	8 (1 USG, 1 D-1, 2 P-4, 1 P-3, 2 NPO, 1 LL)	—	9 (1 USG, 1 D-1, 2 P-4, 1 P-3, 2 NPO, 2 LL)	1 (1 LL)	—	—
Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region	27 (1 USG, 1 D-2, 1 D-1, 4 P-5, 6 P-4, 4 P-3, 1 FS, 1 GS (OL), 1 NPO, 7 LL)	6 (1 D-2, 1 P-5, 1 P-4, 2 P-3, 1 LL)	27 (1 USG, 1 D-2, 1 D-1, 4 P-5, 6 P-4, 4 P-3, 1 FS, 1 GS (OL), 1 NPO, 7 LL)	—	—	—

Abbreviations: ASG, Assistant Secretary-General; FS, Field Service; GS (OL), General Service (Other level); LL, Local level; NPO, National Professional Officer; USG, Under-Secretary-General.

^a Excludes requirements for the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen and the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Conflict Prevention, including on Burundi.

^b The Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria proposes the redeployment of 5 LL positions from the security component to the support component and the redeployment of 2 LL positions from the Syrian Arab Republic to the Kuwait Joint Support Office.

^c Includes 23 positions funded in 2016 under a commitment authority approved by the Advisory Committee (see para. 7 (a) above).

11. The Advisory Committee's comments and recommendations on the staffing proposals for the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus and the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria are contained in paragraphs 12 to 27 below. **The Advisory Committee recommends approval of the Secretary-General's staffing proposals for the remaining seven missions in the report of the Secretary-General.**

Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus

12. The report of the Secretary-General indicates that, with a stated commitment by the leaders to reach a comprehensive settlement agreement as soon as possible, the intensification of the talks in the second half of 2015 is expected to continue for the remainder of 2016 and into 2017, with further intensification of the substantive negotiations and the technical work streams. To address those needs, it is proposed to establish two positions for the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus in 2017 for: (a) one Political Affairs Officer (P-3), to provide substantive support to the Office on all aspects of the negotiations; and (b) one Administrative Assistant (Field Service), to provide administrative and logistical support for the Special Adviser and the meetings of the two sides.

13. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that in 2016, two United Nations staff had been recruited on temporary assignment from other duty stations to support the negotiations and the increased number of meetings as follows: (a) one Economic Affairs Officer (P-4) from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for a period of three months to assist the Special Adviser and support coordination of technical assistance to the negotiations; and (b) one Political Affairs Officer (P-4) from the Department of Political Affairs, in New York, for a period of two months to facilitate and coordinate meetings and to provide substantive guidance to the Special Adviser. The Committee was further informed that the Secretariat expected the establishment of the two proposed positions to replace the need for temporary staff from other duty stations; however, due to the fluid and unpredictable nature of the negotiation process, the changing needs and the expectations of the sides, specialized expertise might be required when existing capacity within the Office of the Special Adviser was not sufficient.

14. The Advisory Committee is of the view that insufficient justification has been provided in support of the proposed establishment of the above-mentioned two positions. In view of the fluid nature of the negotiation process described above and the need for specialized expertise, the Committee considers that the Office of the Special Adviser should continue with the current arrangements and recruit temporary staff as and when required, rather than establish new positions. In this connection, the Advisory Committee recalls that the Office also obtains substantive and logistical support from the other United Nations presence in the mission area, namely the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) (see A/70/717, para. 10). **The Committee trusts that the Office will take full advantage of those existing arrangements with UNFICYP to obtain the necessary additional support, as required.**

15. **In view of the foregoing, the Advisory Committee recommends against approval of the Secretary-General's proposals for the establishment of two additional positions for one Political Affairs Officer (P-3) and**

one Administrative Assistant (Field Service) for the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus in 2017. Any related non-post resources should be adjusted accordingly. The Advisory Committee recommends approval of the Secretary-General's remaining staffing proposals for the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus.

Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria

16. For the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, a net increase of 52 positions is proposed, reflecting the proposed establishment of 58 new positions and abolishment of 6 positions, resulting in a total staffing complement of 132 positions in 2017, reflecting a 65 per cent increase compared with the current level of 80 positions. Paragraphs 150 to 152 of the report of the Secretary-General (A/71/365/Add.1) provides information on the proposed distribution of the mission's personnel among the substantive, security and support components and by location, in Geneva, Damascus, New York and Kuwait.

New positions

17. The 58 positions¹ proposed for establishment comprise: (a) 32 new positions under the substantive component (1 D-1, 3 P-5, 8 P-4, 9 P-3, 1 P-2, 3 General Service (Other level)) and 7 Local level); (b) 7 new positions under the security component (3 Field Service and 4 Local level); and (c) 19 new positions under the support component (2 P-4, 2 P-3, 1 Field Service and 14 Local level).

18. The location and functions of the proposed positions are summarized as follows:

(a) A total of 13 positions (1 D-1, 1 P-5, 4 P-4, 3 P-3, 1 P-2 and 3 General Service (Other level)) are proposed under the substantive component in Geneva, comprising:

(i) Facilitation of intra-Syrian talks: 7 positions (1 P-5, 1 P-4, 1 P-3, 1 P-2 and 3 General Service (Other level)) are proposed for:

a. One Senior Public Information Officer Spokesperson (1 P-5), to head the Public Information Office in Geneva and serve as Spokesperson for the Special Envoy;

b. One Special Assistant (1 P-4), to provide logistical and substantive support to four senior-level consultants to be engaged as formal facilitators for the talks;

c. One Political Affairs Officer (1 P-3), to provide secretariat services for the talks and inputs into reports to United Nations headquarters and to the Security Council;

d. One Public Information Officer (1 P-2);

e. Three Administrative Assistants (3 General Service (Other level)), to provide administrative support to the talks as well as to ISSG task forces;

¹ Includes 23 positions funded in 2016 under a commitment authority approved by the Advisory Committee (see para. 7 (a) above).

- (ii) Constitution and Elections-related matters: one Senior Electoral Officer (1 D-1) is proposed to provide advice to the Special Envoy on issues likely to emerge during the Geneva negotiations and assistance with identifying election-related needs and staffing support in the lead-up to the holding of the elections;
- (iii) ISSG task force on humanitarian access and ISSG ceasefire task force and United Nations operations centre: four positions (2 P-4 and 2 P-3) are proposed for:
 - a. One Political Affairs Officer (1 P-4) to support the task force on humanitarian access;
 - b. One Political Affairs Officer (1 P-4) to support the secretariat for the ISSG ceasefire task force and the United Nations operations centre;
 - c. Two Political Affairs Officers (2 P-3) to work in shifts in the operations centre and ensure round-the-clock communications among the relevant ISSG focal points;
- (iv) Syrian Women's Advisory Board and Civil Society Support Room: one Gender Adviser (1 P-4), to provide ongoing support to the Advisory Board and advice to the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General;
- (b) A total of 19 positions (2 P-5, 4 P-4, 6 P-3 and 7 Local level) are proposed under the substantive component in Damascus, comprising:
 - (i) One Senior Human Rights Officer (1 P-5), to strengthen the United Nations capacity to assess/monitor the compliance with relevant Security Council resolutions;
 - (ii) One Senior Military Adviser (1 P-5), to provide technical and subject-matter advice on the cessation of hostilities/ceasefires to the Head of Office in Damascus; support local mediation efforts; establish and maintain local relationships with parties and key interlocutors to the conflict; and maintain sustainable liaison channels with key international stakeholders;
 - (iii) Four Military Advisers (1 P-4 and 3 P-3), to support the Senior Military Adviser and to be deployed to existing hubs such as Aleppo and Homs when security conditions permit;
 - (iv) Two Interpreters/Translators (1 P-4 and 1 P-3), for servicing the various meetings of the Special Envoy, Deputy Special Envoy, the Head of Office and the Political and Military Advisers in Damascus;
 - (v) Four Political Affairs Officers (2 P-4 and 2 P-3), to support the Head of Office and the Deputy; work closely with the Military Advisers; liaise with Syrian interlocutors; monitor national and regional political developments; provide inputs into reports to Headquarters and to the Security Council; participate in the provision of other secretariat services for meetings in the Syrian Arab Republic; and monitor actions taken by key stakeholders;
 - (vi) Seven Local level positions for 2 Administrative Assistants, 3 Language/Translation Assistants and 2 Public Information Assistants, to provide support to the newly proposed positions in Damascus;

(c) A total of 7 positions (3 Field Service and 4 Local level) are proposed under the security component in Damascus, comprising:

(i) Three Operations Assistants (3 Field Service), to assist in maintaining situational awareness, collecting and compiling relevant security information for input into operational planning;

(ii) Four Operations Assistants (4 Local level), to support the Security Officers and the Chief of Security, coordinate with various actors in order to secure the administrative and logistical support for the deployment of mission staff and for the overall functioning of the Office of the Special Envoy;

(d) A total of 2 positions (1 P-4 and 1 P-3) are proposed under the support component in Geneva, comprising:

(i) One Chief Human Resources Officer (1 P-4) to assist the mission leadership, including Chief of Mission Support, in strategic workforce planning for the mission;

(ii) One Finance and Budget Officer (1 P-3) to provide a dedicated resource for performing budget-related functions;

(e) A total of 15 positions (1 Field Service and 14 Local level) are proposed under the support component in Damascus, comprising:

(i) Two Procurement Assistants (1 Field Service and 1 Local level), to provide procurement support, currently provided by the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF). The Assistants will coordinate with UNDOF, which has the delegated authority for procurement on behalf of Office of the Special Envoy;

(ii) Two Inventory and Supply Assistants (Local level), to meet the increased demands related to the expanded mandated activities;

(iii) One Travel Assistant (Local level), to meet increasing travel demands expected from the intensive engagement on the Syrian political process;

(iv) One Team Assistant (Local level), to provide administrative support to the Logistics Officer, in particular the receipt and dispatching of diplomatic pouches and the monitoring of all contracts under the Logistics Section for compliance;

(v) Two Information Technology Assistants (Local level) to provide technical support on relevant hardware and systems applications in view of the increase in staff;

(vi) One Telecommunications Technician (Local level), in view of the increase in staff;

(vii) One Telecommunications Assistant (1 Local level), in view of the increase in staff;

(viii) Three Logistics Assistants (3 Local level), to augment the existing administrative and support-related staffing complement to respond to the expanded mandate of the Office, in lieu of three Logistics Assistant (General Service (Other level)) positions proposed for abolition in Geneva.

(ix) Two Vehicle Technicians (Local level), to carry out preventive maintenance on the vehicles by periodic inspections;

(f) A total of 2 positions (1 P-4 and 1 P-3) are proposed in New York, comprising:

(i) One Human Resources Officer (P-4) in the Field Personnel Division, to provide operational support, policy and guidance, oversight, workforce planning and strategic advisory services;

(ii) One Planning Officer (P-3) in the Operational Support Team in the Office of the Assistant Secretary-General for Field Support, to serve as the principal focal point for all planning for the mission in the Department of Field Support and for all aspects of cross-cutting mission support issues.

Abolishments

19. A total of six posts are proposed for abolishment, comprising:

(a) Three Logistics Assistant positions (3 General Service (Other level)) in Geneva, which are proposed to be established in Damascus (see para. 18 (e) (viii) above);

(b) Three Driver positions (3 Local level) under the security component in Damascus, in view of the reduction in the vehicle fleet.

Redeployments

20. A total of seven positions (7 Local level) are proposed for redeployment as follows:

(a) Two positions from Mission Support in Damascus to the Kuwait Joint Support Office comprising: 1 Administrative Assistant position (Local level), to provide human resources support services; and 1 Finance and Budget Assistant position (Local level);

(b) Five positions (5 Local level) from the security component to Mission Support in Damascus for five drivers in order to adjust the reporting lines.

Comments and recommendations

21. The staffing proposals for the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria include a total of three new finance/budget and human resources management positions (2 P-4 and 1 P-3), located in Geneva and New York, as well as the redeployment of two positions (Local level) from Damascus to Kuwait (see paras. 18 (d), 18 (f) (i) and 20 (a) above). **In view of the deployment of Umoja, the United Nations enterprise resource planning system, which is accessible worldwide and covers finance and human resources management functionality, the Advisory Committee questions both the requirement for such a large number of positions for human resources management and finance/budget functions as well as the need for placing such personnel in so many locations. Accordingly, the Advisory Committee recommends against approval of the proposed positions for one Human Resources Officer (P-4) in the Field Personnel Division of the Department of Field Support in New York, one Chief**

Human Resources Officer (P-4) in Geneva and one Finance and Budget Officer (P-3) in Geneva. Any related non-post resources should be adjusted accordingly.

22. One Planning Officer (P-3) position is proposed in the Operational Support Team in the Office of the Assistant Secretary-General for Field Support (see para. 18 (f) (ii) above). Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the Operational Support Team comprised eight posts (1 D-1, 2 P-5, 3 P-4, 2 General Service (Other level)) and 1 temporary assistance position (1 P-4) funded from the peacekeeping support account. **In view of the staffing levels of the Team, the Advisory Committee is of the view that the functions of the position can be carried out within existing capacity and therefore recommends against approval of the proposed Planning Officer (P-3) position. Any related non-post resources should be adjusted accordingly.**

23. As indicated in paragraph 20 (a) above, the Secretary-General is proposing redeployment of two positions (Local level) from Mission Support in Damascus to the Kuwait Joint Support Office. In this connection, the Advisory Committee recalls the comments and observations it has made in the past few years and reiterates its view that an independent verification and review of the full costs and benefits, both qualitative and quantitative, of the Support Office would be useful (see A/70/7/Add.10, para. 58; and A/69/628, para. 56). **The Advisory Committee considers that this question has not yet been addressed and remains unconvinced as to the efficacy of the proposed arrangement for the redeployment of posts from Damascus to Kuwait. The Committee is also of the view that the utilization of the Kuwait Joint Support Office needs to be revisited, taking into account the Secretariat-wide deployment of Umoja and the future global service delivery model (see A/71/595). In view of the foregoing, the Advisory Committee recommends against approval of the proposed redeployment of two positions (Local level) from Mission Support in Damascus to the Kuwait Joint Support Office.**

24. The Advisory Committee was informed that vacancy factors of 40 and 25 per cent had been applied in estimating the 2017 requirements for international and national staff respectively, compared with 30 and 10 per cent in 2016. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was provided with additional information on the status and incumbency levels of the 23 additional positions proposed for 2016 under the commitment authority approved by the Advisory Committee (see para. 7 (a) above), showing that, as at 31 August 2016, only 3 of the 23 positions approved were encumbered, reflecting a vacancy factor of 87 per cent. **The Advisory Committee expects that every effort will be made to fill the vacant posts that are needed expeditiously.**

25. Upon request, the Advisory Committee was also provided with further information showing that, as at 30 April 2016, a total of seven positions had been vacant for two years or more. **The Committee reiterates its recommendation that the continued requirement for any posts that have remained vacant for two years or more should be fully justified or proposed for abolishment.**

26. Notwithstanding the above, the Advisory Committee recognizes that the Office faces extraordinary operational and security challenges that have an impact on the pace of recruitment of staff to the newly approved positions. The Committee also considers that certain positions proposed — for instance, the Senior Electoral

Officer (D-1) — may not be required in the immediate future. **The Advisory Committee trusts that the Office will fill the proposed positions only as and when the requirement for the functions of the positions arise and can realistically be carried out.** Under the circumstances and taking into account the significant increase in the proposed staffing level of the mission (see para. 16 above), the Advisory Committee doubts that the planned positions can realistically be filled in 2017. **Accordingly, the Advisory Committee recommends that vacancy factors of 60 per cent be applied for the new international and 40 per cent for the new national staff positions proposed for 2017. The Committee further recommends that any related non-post resources be adjusted accordingly.**

27. **Subject to its recommendations in paragraphs 21, 22, 23 and 26 above, the Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly approve the Secretary-General's staffing proposals for the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, including those related to the 23 positions funded under a commitment authority approved by the Advisory Committee (see para. 7 (a) above).**

B. Comments and recommendations on operational costs

28. The proposed resources for operational costs for the nine special political missions under thematic cluster I in 2017 amount to \$13,781,500, reflecting an increase of \$5,252,000 (61.6 per cent) compared with the appropriation of \$8,529,500 for 2016 (see table 2 above). Taking into account the projected overexpenditure at the end of 2016, estimated at \$2,304,300 (27.0 per cent) over the appropriation for 2016 (\$8,529,500), the additional resources for operational costs sought by the Secretary-General for the nine missions under thematic cluster I amount to \$16,085,800.

29. The Advisory Committee was informed that the key variances in the operational costs between the approved resources for 2016 and proposed requirements for 2017 were mainly related to higher requirements under:

(a) Facilities and infrastructure (\$2,784,200, or 122.1 per cent) for: (i) the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria (\$2,764,300), related to the provision of rental of secure premises in Damascus; and (ii) the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus (\$21,000), owing to increases for maintenance services and utilities as well as the provision for stationery and office supplies, previously budgeted under other supplies, services and equipment;

(b) Other supplies, services and equipment (\$1,409,100, or 174.1 per cent), mainly for the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria (\$1,400,100), for additional requirements for conferences, meetings, peace talks, task force meetings and the round-the-clock operations centre;

(c) Official travel (\$906,500, or 28.3 per cent) for: (i) the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria (\$1,037,000), related to additional travel to be undertaken by the Special Envoy, the Deputy Special Envoy and substantive staff to the region, to the capital cities of the permanent members of the Security Council and to United Nations Headquarters for consultations with various stakeholders; and (ii) the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on

Cyprus (\$28,700) related to increased requirements for training travel for staff, additional trips from Geneva to New York and from Geneva to Cyprus for the Special Adviser, a longer duration of the trips, and an increase in the daily subsistence allowance (DSA) rate for Cyprus from \$165 to \$169. The above increases would be partially offset by lower requirements for: (i) the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Myanmar (\$38,900), owing to a reduction in the number of trips to the region; (ii) the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004) (\$108,900), owing to a reduced number of trips by the Special Envoy and his staff to Lebanon and other destinations in the region in 2017; (iii) the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region (\$8,900), owing to decreases in the number and duration of the planned trips as well as rates for air travel and DSA; and (iv) the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sudan and South Sudan (\$2,500), owing to a reduction in the number of trips;

(d) Ground transportation (\$101,400, or 21.6 per cent) for: (i) the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria (\$92,300), to provide for a contractual arrangement with a taxi company to provide transportation services for the national staff to travel to and from the office to their areas of residence to comply with Department of Safety and Security requirements (see para. 33 below); and (ii) the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus (\$11,400), owing to the requirement for one additional vehicle due to an increase in staff, to an increased number of off-site meetings and to new contractual rates in effect as of 1 July 2016;

(e) Communications (\$31,800, or 4.5 per cent) for: (i) the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus (\$19,600), mainly due to increased requirements for public information-related services due to the need to monitor local television and radio broadcasts in view of the acceleration in the negotiations, and provision for the acquisition of one crypto telephone; and (ii) the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sudan and South Sudan (\$12,200) for maintenance of equipment and communications support services as a result of the separation of leadership of Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sudan and South Sudan and the United Nations Office to the African Union;

(f) Consultants (\$24,300, or 4.8 per cent), mainly for the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region owing to a higher number of consultancy months (9 months in 2016 and 10 months in 2017) and higher average cost of consultancies for 2017 compared with 2016, due to the need to hire consultants with a higher level of experience (see para. 35 below).

30. The higher requirements under the above categories of expenditure would be partially offset by lower requirements under:

(a) Air transportation (\$4,800), for the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region owing to efforts to prioritize activities and use alternative modes of transportation to a greater extent, where possible;

(b) Information technology (\$500), reflecting reduced requirements for: (i) the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus (\$23,000) due to decreased requirements for replacement of information technology equipment; and (ii) the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region (\$37,600), owing to the discontinuation of internationally contracted information technology personnel and provision of the service by the United Nations Office at Nairobi instead. The above reductions would be offset by higher requirements for: (i) the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria (\$47,700), mainly due to the increase in staffing resulting in increased requirements for computers as well as licences and information technology services which are based on the number of computers; and (ii) the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sudan and South Sudan (\$12,600) for the acquisition of equipment, services, licences, spare parts and supplies as a result of the separation of leadership of that Office and the United Nations Office to the African Union.

31. The Advisory Committee recommends approval of the Secretary-General's proposals for the operational costs for the nine missions under thematic cluster I.

Ground transportation

32. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the vehicle fleet of the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria consists of 1 armoured ambulance and 32 armoured vehicles, 23 of which had been donated by the European Union, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America to the former mission in the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Nations Supervision Mission in Syria (UNSMIS). The Committee was further informed that the remaining nine armoured vehicles were United Nations-owned equipment, of which eight had been procured by UNSMIS, the predecessor mission, and transferred to the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria and the ninth, an ambulance, had been transferred from UNAMI. Twenty-four vehicles were utilized by the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, and the surplus of 8 vehicles had been loaned to identified United Nations agencies supporting European Union-funded programmes. The Advisory Committee was also informed that the proposed resources for ground transportation included a provision of \$120,000 for spare parts for the armoured vehicles which had higher costs of repair and maintenance.

33. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was further informed that the decision to use taxis for national staff at the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria (see para. 29 (d) above) had been approved by the Security Management Team of the mission, which consists of the Designated Official, the head of each agency present at the duty station and the Chief Security Adviser and advises the Designated Official on all security-related matters at the duty station.

34. The Advisory Committee comments further on policy and cross-cutting issues related to ground transportation in its main report on special political missions (A/71/595).

Consultants

Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region

35. With regard to the consultants with a high level of experience referred to in paragraph 29 (f) above, the Advisory Committee was informed that this referred to consultants with high proficiency and expertise on the Great Lakes regional affairs in their respective thematic field who are hired at level C in accordance with administrative instruction ST/AI/2013/4.² For 2017, the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region envisaged hiring of consultants at level C in the areas of economic affairs, human rights, gender affairs, political affairs and programme management (monitoring and evaluation).

36. Upon enquiry as to the status of expenditures under consultants, the Advisory Committee was informed that actual expenditures as at 30 September 2016 amounted to \$24,600 against the 2016 appropriation of \$70,000 and that projected expenditures for the period from October to December were estimated at \$51,200, bringing the projected expenditures for 2016 to \$75,800, reflecting an increase of \$5,800 over the appropriation. The Committee was further informed that in 2016, due to delays from partners and stakeholders in rolling out joint programmes, the recruitment of several consultants was ongoing. Therefore, the actual expenditures will only be reflected by the end of the year when the individual consultants would have completed their assignments. **The Advisory Committee expects the Secretary-General to monitor patterns of expenditure and ensure that the concentration of expenditure at year end reflects efficient and effective use of resources.**

Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus

37. The Advisory Committee was informed that the proposed resources for consultants (\$116,400) would provide for consultancy services to assist the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus and provide expertise in: governance, power sharing and other administrative matters; property and related matters; economic and social matters; human rights law; census; natural resources; and cartography. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was further informed that in 2017 a consultant on European human rights law will provide detailed insight and extensive analysis of the requirements under the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms that would assist in several essential aspects of the negotiations and the settlement. For instance, expertise might become necessary to assist the sides in exploring a negotiated solution to outstanding property issues that will be compatible with fundamental human rights tenets or the setting up of a bicomunal, bizonal federation and the safeguarding of individuals'

² In paragraph 6 of administrative instruction ST/AI/2013/4, level C is described as follows: "This level shall be authorized to engage an individual with extensive relevant professional experience requiring specialized or technical knowledge and skills. Individuals at this level will be expected to develop new approaches, techniques or policies and/or design guidelines, standard operating procedures and a project's theme. Individuals would be engaged in projects of broad scope and considerable depth that will have an impact on the overall execution of programmes or service of a function or various interrelated areas. Expected outputs of the consultancy at this level may relate, inter alia, to providing technical support; leading group dynamics; and undertaking report drafting or project-wide proposals."

rights in the future power-sharing structures. **The Advisory Committee expects that such expertise will be acquired only as and when required and that the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus will make every effort to explore all options for seeking such expertise within the existing capacity of the Organization, prior to the engagement of a consultant.**

Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide

38. The Advisory Committee was informed that the proposed resources for consultancy services (\$71,000) would provide research, preparation and training expertise on the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity in order to implement the capacity-building project of the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide. The resources would cover the daily fees and travel requirements of 13 consultants engaged on two planned research projects (1 consultant per project) and eight planned seminars (2 consultants per seminar for each of the first three seminars and 1 each for the other five seminars), with training locations in four regions. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the target of the Office was to co-organize training seminars and workshops in 10 Member States in different regions and that it was anticipated that consultants will be required for eight of these activities. The report of the Secretary-General (table 8, indicator of achievement (a) (ii)) also indicates that six Member States or regional/subregional organizations would receive technical assistance in 2017. The Advisory Committee was further informed that the Office had set as a target the provision of technical assistance to six Member States or regional/subregional organizations, based on the request of these Member States or regional/subregional organizations. **The Advisory Committee expects the Secretary-General to ensure that the proposed resources are aligned with the proposed activities. It trusts that details on the resources utilized and the training given will be provided in the relevant performance report for the biennium 2016-2017.**

C. Other matters

Location of the Head of the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria

39. With regard to the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, the Advisory Committee was informed that a decision had been made to relocate the position of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General from Belgium to Geneva effective 1 January 2016. The General Assembly was informed of this decision during its consideration of the proposed programme budget for 2016-2017. In its resolution 70/248 (sect. XX, paras. 14-15), the Assembly noted the decision to locate the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria in Geneva, and decided that all costs arising from that relocation shall be accommodated within the approved resources of the Office. The Advisory Committee was further informed that, in accordance with the memorandum of understanding with the United Nations Development Programme, which requires a three-month notice period, the Office in Belgium was formally closed effective 31 March 2016.

III. Recommendation

40. The Secretary-General's budgetary proposals for the 31 special political missions for 2017, which require action to be taken by the General Assembly, are set out in paragraph 129 of his main report on estimates in respect of special political missions, good offices and other political initiatives authorized by the Assembly and/or the Security Council (A/71/365). Subject to the recommendations contained in paragraphs 15, 21, 22, 23 and 26 above, as well as the recommendations in its main report (A/71/595), the Advisory Committee recommends approval of the Secretary-General's proposal for the resource requirements for 2017 for the nine special political missions under thematic cluster I.